

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, this question has taken half an hour. Please sit down. The questions are long, the answers are long, the interpretations are long; there are reinterprtations which are long; but the real essence of this question is the same, as everyone has listened. So, there is no need for further questions on this. (*Interruptions*)

Now, let us take up the next question.

श्रीमती सविता शारदा: सर, (*Interruptions*)

श्री सभापति: ठीक है, पांच क्वेश्चन हो गए और आधा घंटा हो गया।

Jewels of former royal houses of India in foreign capitals

*562. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that jewels belonging to former Royal Houses of India were taken out of the country and disposed of in foreign capitals after Independence; and

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal with Government to recover these jewels in view of their historical significance?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Government have no specific information whether any of the former royal families have disposed off jewellery and such other antiquities in violation of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972.

DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, may I draw the attention of the Government to the disclosures made by Jhon Adamson and Catherine Prayer in their book, 'Maharajas' Jewels', in which they have disclosed about the jewels of Indian royal houses in foreign countries. Sir, it is strange that the Government is not aware that the rare collection of Brazilian emeralds, South African Diamonds and Kashmiri sapphires taken away from India are in Rome, Paris and London. Sir, nothing has been established so far on the magnificent collection of jewels by Sitadevi, the former Maharani, the ruler of Baroda, who died in France. Does the Government know about the ancient jewels of Tukojirao, the third Holkar of

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Indore, Jagjit Singh of Kapurthala and other legendary jewels from other countries?

Sir, finally, these jewels are importantly significant not because of their monetary value, but because of their historical and cultural significance. In the light of this information, I would like to know whether the Government would initiate steps to investigate into the whole episode.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, the restitution of antiquities is governed by two Acts. One is the Antiquities Exposed (Control) Act of 1947 and another is the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Therefore, whatever has gone out of this country to various museums and various places across the world before 1947, it is difficult to reconstitute them through these two Acts. The point is, it can be done through bilateral dialogue only. Secondly, according to these two Acts, especially according to the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, there are some registrable antiquities, for example, sculpture in all media, paintings, manuscripts and wooden sculptures. But it does not cover jewellery. Therefore, we do not have a register. Jewellery used to belong to those royal families. They might have taken away before 1947. So far as control of export of such jewellery from 1947 till date is concerned, we have not received any application in this regard so that we can inform our Customs Department and give them permission regarding such exports.

DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: In view of the information given by me, will the hon. Minister go through the entire episode once again and investigate the matter, which is not of small importance?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, I congratulate the hon. Member for his research in this regard. But we have to take a view whether all these things had been taken away from India before 1947 or after that. If the details are given to me, Sir, I will definitely look into the whole matter.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the question deals with the jewels belonging to former royal houses of India taken out of

the country and disposed of in foreign capitals after independence. The question is very specific.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, according to our information, first, such jewellery does not come under the registrable category. Secondly, the royal houses or anybody who wants to transfer back such jewellery, they have to apply to the Archaeological Survey of India. But we have not received any such application. We receive 15-16 applications every year about export of various such antiquities, but not about jewellery.

SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Sir, there is an instance where, long back, one of the Chief Ministers had gone in search of the Bhawani Sword of Shivaji. (*Interruptions*) Yes; Antuleji. I did not want to name him. But he had gone. I would like to know whether that sword has been brought back to India or not. Has it been traced? At the same time, there are many jewels which had not been exported, but had been taken away by the ex-rulers to foreign countries. Is the Ministry thinking of collecting the information about all these jewels in order to get them back to India?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, there are many things, like the most treasured diamond, Kohinoor, *Kalgi* of Guru Govind Singhji, and the Bhawani Sword of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. But there is a UNESCO Convention of 1970. They have constituted an inter-Governmental Committee. According to that Convention, only when a country exhausts all other means, we can go to that Committee. Till today, that Committee of UNESCO has also not solved any problem. For example, it has not been able to solve the problem of Greece and the United Kingdom; the problem of Jordan and the USA. Anyhow, the United Kingdom is also not a party to this Convention. You cannot go to the UNESCO Committee for restitution of such antiquities. The United Kingdom itself is not a party to this Convention. But regarding some of the things, the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, formerly the Ministry of Education, had pursued the matter, but to no avail. I think we can take back these antiquities only through a bilateral dialogue.

SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Sir, he has not replied whether the Bhawani Sword of Shivaji has been brought back to India or not.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, this does not pertain to the main question. A sword cannot be termed as jewellery.

श्री राजीव शुक्ला: चेयरमैन सर, कोहनूर हीरे का जो मसला है, इस पर पहले भी जब हमारे सिंघवी साहब वहां हाई कमिश्नर थे, उस वक्त भी कुछ बातें वहां पर हुई थीं। उस डायमंड को उन लोगों ने तीन हिस्सों में तोड़ दिया था। उस वक्त यह बात हुई थी कि उन तीन हिस्सों में से कोई एक हिस्सा भारत सरकार को मिल सकता है। मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि कोहनूर हीरे के किसी एक हिस्से को यहां लाने के बारे में क्या कोई प्रयास किया जा रहा है ? इसके अतिरिक्त टीपू सुल्तान के जो वस्त्र हैं और लड़ाई के वक्त उनका जो सामान था, वह भी स्कॉटलैंड के म्यूजियम में है। इन सबके लिए मंत्री जी क्या प्रयास कर रहे हैं ?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, regarding the Kohinoor, till 1970, the Government had pursued the matter. Again, we can pursue it, Sir.

DR. M.N. DAS: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the question is, whether it is a fact that jewels belonging to former Royal Houses of India were taken out of the country and disposed of in foreign capitals after Independence. The hon. Minister says that the Government of India has no specific information as to whether any of the former Royal families have disposed of the jewellery and such other antiquities, in violation of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972. Sir, with your kind permission, let me inform the hon. Minister and also the hon. Members of the House that the real transfer of jewellery of the Royal Houses took place in the year 1948. Sir, at the time of signing the Instrument of Accession, out of 565, most of the princes of India had signed the Instrument of Accession, but some of them hoped that they would continue to rule over their people even after the British rule, under the protection of the new dispensation. But within a few months, when they were obliged to sign the Treaty or Agreement of merger with the neighbouring States, quickly and hastily, they took two desperate steps. One was to destroy all the official papers of their State. They destroyed the enormous correspondence they had with the British authorities, with their own officers, with the neighbouring princes and other princes. They destroyed everything.

Sir, when I told one ex-Maharaja of Orissa that a student wanted to carry out research on his State, to write a history of his family, and asked him "would you please show him all the papers relating to the correspondences of your predecessors", he bluntly said that at the time of merger, he had burnt down heaps of papers belonging to his State. Heaps of papers were destroyed as if those were of no value. I said "you had no right to do a disservice to your ancestors and to the posterity." The second step they took was...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put the question.

DR. M.N. DAS: out of fear...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Das, please put the question.

DR. M.N. DAS: I am coming to that, Sir. Out of fear of their rebellious people, they quickly transferred their jewellery, diamonds, pearls and everything to some safer places. It may be that some of them might have kept that jewellery, etc. in the safe lockers of some foreign banks. Mr. Reddy wanted to know if the Government had any such information. We are not talking of the 'Kohinoor'; we are not talking of the 'Sword of Chhatrapati Shivaji' but we are talking of the jewellery of the Indian Royal families which is still kept in the lockers of some foreign banks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Das, please put the question. This information has been given in this House twice or thrice.

DR. M.N. DAS: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the question is, can the hon. Minister take the trouble of writing, atleast to Switzerland, because, in Swiss Banks, some safe lockers are there where the jewellery of Royal Houses would have been preserved.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Sir, I am thoroughly enlightened by the information given by the senior Member. The thing is, as I have already stated in this august House, jewellery does not purport to the notified category of items, antiquities, which should be registered with the Archaeological Survey of India. Despite that, we have got some information about some of these things. One such thing is the gold mohar coins of Nizam. One mohar coin weights nearly 8

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kilograms, and another one about 1 kilogram. They are worth 8.5 million U.S. dollars. They are in a Swiss Bank. But they wanted to auction it and there is a court case pending with one of the Cantons of Switzerland. That much of action the Archaeological Survey of India has taken in that regard. But, Sir, regarding the other things, we do not have any mandate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, next question. Question No. 563; Shrimati Chandresh Kumari. ...*(Interruptions)*... We have already spent fifteen minutes on this question ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Mr. Chairman, Sir..*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the first question, we had half-an-hour; and this question has taken fifteen minutes. ...*(Interruptions)*... No; no, I know; there are twenty Members who want to put their supplementaries. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Sir, I do not challenge your authority, but whoever catches your eye must get a chance, and I was one of the first Members who raised his hand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wanted to give you a chance to put your supplementary on this question. But Dr. M.N. Das had given a lot of information rather than put the question.

Shortage of drinking water In Himachal Pradesh

*563. SHRIMATI CHANDRESH KUMARI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether acute shortage of safe drinking water, because of insufficient rainfall and snowfall during current winter season in Himachal Pradesh, has been reported to Government recently;

(b) whether Government have been requested to provide special Central assistance to Himachal Pradesh to enable State Government to undertake various projects to augment drinking water supply in rural areas of the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof with action taken on these requests so far?